

Sport

Germany reacts at FIFA rule

BONN, Feb 8 (Reuters) - German soccer authorities said on Monday they had been taken by surprise by a new FIFA rule on World Cup stadium capacity which rules out several of the country's proposed venues for the 2006 finals.

The German Soccer Federation (DFB) said it remained confident of its bid to host the 2006 World Cup, but would have to organise increased capacities at some of its venues.

The rule change was a surprise to us and we have to see now how it can be met.

But we are confident about our bid and that the stadiums can reach capacity," a DFB spokesman told Reuters on Monday.

Soccer governing body FIFA has asked that World Cup grounds to have a minimum capacity of 40,000. Germany had been working on the basis of 30,000, the capacity required in the World Cup in France in 1998.

The new ruling on capacity particularly affects stadiums in the former east German cities of Dresden and Magdeburg, but the DFB said it that would work towards increasing capacities.

African Super Cup Asec's

ABIDJAN, Feb 8: Asec Abidjan proved their claim to Africa club soccer supremacy when they beat Esperance of Tunisia 3-1 after extra time in the final of the African Super Cup on Sunday, reports Reuters.

Asec, who won their first African Champions' League title in December, triumphed over a seasoned Tunisian side packed with internationals and brimming with confidence after their victory in the African Cup Winners Cup last year.

But the victory could be at some cost to Asec and Abidjan's Houphouet-Boigny Stadium after yet another crowd problem involving the club at the same venue.

The start of extra time was held up for several minutes as Asec supporters rained missiles on the pitch in an angry show of disappointment after a last minute Esperance goal denied the home side victory in regulation time.

Water bottles and other objects started flying as soon as Esperance goalkeeper Chokri El-Ouer converted an 88th minute penalty awarded by Egyptian referee Gamal Ghandour after Asec's Toure Kolo Habib handled the ball in the box.

The fracas could not have happened at a worse moment for Asec and Ivorian soccer. The entire governing council of African soccer's ruling body, CAF, was in the stadium with the match taking place on the eve of a CAF meeting in Abidjan.

It was not immediately clear whether it was fear of further trouble that prompted match commissioners to decide on extra time rather than penalty kicks as set in the championship regulations.

Asec and the Houphouet-Boigny Stadium have faced the threat of sanctions since crowd violence marred last year's drawn African Champions League match between the Ivorians and Raja of Morocco.

That violence followed a decision by Mauritian referee Lee Chin Young not to award a penalty after what appeared to be a foul on Asec's captain Tchirissa Guel in the opening minutes of the match.

riot police had to escort Raja and young out of the stadium, running the gauntlet of irate Asec supporters who later rampaged through parts of central Abidjan.

Esperance's equaliser came as Asec appeared to have victory in hand despite a spirited second-half fightback by the Tunisians.

Asec's ever menacing attacker Venance Zeze had given his side the lead in the 36th minute after beating the defence to power in a right footer at close range to cap a dazzling solo effort.

Harouna Dindane put Asec ahead again in the sixth minute of extra time and Zeze put the match beyond the reach of Esperance with Asec's third goal and his own double in the 120th minute.

CAF president Issa Hayatou was the chief guest at the seventh super cup match. The tournament was introduced in 1993 pitting the Champions League victor against the holder of the Cup Winners Cup.

Esperance have already won the title once before, in 1995.

Advantage Howard

CANBERRA, Feb 8: The federal government has backed Prime Minister John Howard ahead of Queen Elizabeth to open the 2000 Sydney Olympics, reports AP.

Howard has maintained that the Australian leader of the day should open the games instead of the Queen, who is the titular head of state, or her representative, the Governor-general.

Government senate leader Robert Hill said ministers had discussed who might open the Games following Howard's pre-election statement that he believed the Prime Minister should have the honor.

"I think it has unanimous support," Hill said Monday. "There was a cabinet decision on who should open the games, subject to official views."

The International Olympic Committee has said it will accept the Games being opened by the Prime Minister instead of the Queen.

REGRETS

Due to space constraint our regular item CROSSWORD could not be accommodated.

Sports Editor



Junior Murray, the West Indies opener tries to turn South African fast bowler Allan Donald during the seventh and final one-day match at Pretoria on February 7. — AFP photo

Kallis' one-man show



CENTURION, Feb 7 (AP/Reuters): Jacques Kallis led South Africa to a 50-run victory Sunday in the seventh and final one-day international against the West Indies.

Set to score 227 for victory, the tourists were eventually bowled out for 176. The result secured the 6-1 win in the one-day series to add to their 5-0 whitewash in the Tests.

Perhaps South Africa's dominance was typified by man-of-the-match Kallis. He batted with determination and skill, took three outstanding catches, including one off his own bowling, and took three wickets in two hostile spells.

Klusener scoring 21 off 23 balls and Symcox 17 at a run a ball.

It was a good effort by the visitors, who, inexplicably, did not play their best fast bowler, Curly Ambrose. But captain Lara returning after an injury shuffled his resources well and bowled both Reon King and McLean right through their allotted 10 overs each. They responded with two wickets apiece and between them, went for only 3.5 runs an over in their 20.

The home team moved ahead of the West Indies as the most successful team in the one-day version of the game. South Africa have now won 63.6 per cent of their matches, edging past the West Indies' 63.3 per cent win level.

Since the succession of Hansie Cronje to the captaincy, South Africa have won 76 out of 102 matches — a 77.5 per cent success rate.

Meanwhile, man-of-the-series Klusener scored 229 runs off the 203 balls he faced in the series, at an average of 76.3 and took 11 wickets at a superb average of 19.2.

Added to that the consistently good fielding of the South Africans and the fact that they always seemed to have more men like Klusener and Kallis available, and it is easy to understand why they are favourites to win the World Cup later this year in England.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the seventh one-day match between South Africa and the West Indies at Centurion Park on Sunday:

SOUTH AFRICA

Gibbs c Jacobs b King 12
Rindell b King 10
Cullinan b McLean 7
Kallis c Arthurton b Lewis 66
Cronje c Jacobs b McLean 11
Rhodes c b Arthurton 41
Pollock b Arthurton 22
Boucher run out 0
Klusener not out 21

Result: South Africa won by 50 runs and win series 6-1.

Man-of-the-match: Jacques Kallis.

Man-of-the-series: Lance Klusener.

First match: Johannesburg — South Africa won by 2 wickets.

Second match: East London — West Indies won by 43 runs.

Third match: Durban — South Africa won by 55 runs.

Fourth match: Port Elizabeth — South Africa won by 99 runs.

Fifth match: Cape Town — South Africa won by 89 runs.

Sixth match: Bloemfontein — South Africa won by 114 runs.

South Africa scored 226 for eight in their innings. Cronje won the toss for the seventh time and elected to bat on a pitch which promised good batting. But the West Indies gave their best bowling performance of the series, restricting the strong batting line up to a relatively modest total. Only a partnership of 98 runs in 119 balls between Kallis and Jonty Rhodes troubled the bowlers.

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